

The George Washington University Oral History Project
Interview with Robert Keith
Conducted on January 19, 2000 by Zachary Schrag

ZS: Zachary Schrag is interviewing Robert Keith by telephone. It is January 19, 2000. I am in Washington, D.C., and where are you, Mr. Keith?

RK: In Del Mar, California.

ZS: Where is that? That's in the south?

RK: It's part of San Diego.

ZS: Okay, and it is a little past 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time, around 10:00 Pacific Time. And just for the record, you are aware that this interstate call is being recorded.

RK: Yes, sir.

ZS: Terrific. Now, we've corresponded by email already, and as you know, one of my basic questions here is why the 1962 NCTA report came out so differently from the 1959 Mass Transportation Survey Plan. You worked on both of those. Now, it seems to me that there are a couple of possible explanations. One is that there were technological changes in – methodological changes, that is, in how the procedures were done. I know that this was a period when computer forecasting was being worked out, when the Gravity Model was a brand new device. And then, the other possibly is political changes. Between the

two reports, we had a presidential election. John F. Kennedy came in, and he appointed a completely new set of people to the process, some of whom, such as Darwin Stolzenbach in particular, and also Libby Rowe and others, were quite opposed to the highways that were proposed under the Eisenhower administration. I'm trying to distinguish between those two, and I wonder if, off the bat, you would have any comments about technical changes, for example?

RK: Well, my reaction all these years is that there weren't that many technical changes. What you say is true, that we did one of the first computer-based, computer-oriented traffic forecasting of the post-war period, or of any period, and perhaps there was a lot of (indiscernible 00:02:38) going on. But I don't think what happened between the late fifties and the early sixties, meaning in the early NCTA work, I don't think there was that much additional change, and I don't think that had much to do with the results. I think the results were more what you suggested, in the political and attitudinal approach to what's good for a city. I think you used the term once in chatting with me earlier, or maybe email, I mean. We viewed the MTS as giving the transit a supplementary role to highway, but I don't think that's the right term. I think the idea was to identify a sensible rail rapid transit start, because it seemed to be required, and didn't care to take on a battle at that time with the freeway, highway construction elements of the community, both in the agencies and in the political world, in the real world.

ZS: Who was making those kind of political judgments? Was that Bartholomew, or someone else was trying to stay within the art of the possible?

RK: I think it primarily came from Harland Bartholomew, not him alone, but as we get in the last year or so of the MTS work and time for making some decisions and coming up with recommendations, we had a lot of battles that were sort of on a very close to 50-50 basis, 50-50 between going for any rail at all or just abandoning the rail notion. But finally, it just simply worked out in a matter of a lot of honest thinking and trying to see what the city would be best off looking like a decade or two down the road, and that's what led to the rail transit recommendation. It was a modest rail transit recommendation, because I'm sure we all thought that that's about all that the public could absorb, or could believe was possible or affordable.

The highways, we didn't do much to change the highway plans that the states were planning to build anyway. Everything within the MTS was really already in the plans of the District, Virginia, and Maryland. Without trying to recall all the intimate details, we didn't do much to change those highway proposals. I guess you'd use the term we decided it would be better to – in order to get rail transit support, we didn't want to take on the entire establishment, which the highway side represented at that moment.

And what happened in the 1960s and the creation of the NCTA was it was largely the citizens, Darwin Stolzenbach and Libby, as you mentioned, some of these people who really believed that the highway destruction that was being seen all over the country at that point was more than Washington should put up with. It wasn't that the MTS people would have disagreed with that so much, because I personally was involved in a number

of disputes with the highway people all through the MTS, trying to get them to reduce the highway emphasis. But these people, meaning the people come in in the Kennedy administration, they simply had the power at the moment, and they carried out these real concerns with excessive highway destruction. It wasn't so much a technical traffic forecasting situation that led to being able to say what they did. They simply said it.

ZS: So, if you don't like my terms, supplement and substitute, what would you use to distinguish those two approaches?

RK: Well, a simple change from supplement I guess would be to say complement.

ZS: Complement, okay, rather than a substitute.

RK: I think the MTS probably believed that most of the highway demand was going to be – well, we certainly believed that the highway demand was going to be there. We didn't see that rail transit was going to be a very, very substantial substitute for building highways, however. We saw it more as a device that would maintain the life of the District of Columbia, make it a livable place, as opposed to trying to just stop highway construction. I'm sure we all would have said, when asked the question this way, highway demand, this demand for urban mobility, that's not a new 1980, 1990 problem. It was very visible, obvious to us at that time. But how in the world are we going to absorb all this urban mobility that is being generated in every metropolitan area in the country? Just stopping all highway construction seemed like a pretty blind way to handle

this urban mobility problem. And, you know, forty years later, very few people have solved it. They haven't been able to answer that question. How do you handle urban mobility?

ZS: I realize I should back up a bit. What was your background, prior to joining the NCPC staff? Where did you grow up, and where were you trained?

RK: Well, I grew up in Massachusetts and I'm a civil engineer. I had my bachelor's degree back in 1949. Then I went to graduate school at Yale in a highway transportation graduate level school.

ZS: Under Wilbur Smith?

RK: Yeah. Okay, you know about that. That's where I went, yeah, the Bureau of Highway Traffic.

ZS: Did you overlap with Tom Deen there?

RK: He was several years after I was. That was '52 when I graduated from Yale's Bureau of Highway Traffic. Then I spent the next five or six years in the city parking business, both making demand studies and studying both traffic and parking, but with an emphasis on parking, building parking garages, doing revenue bond issues for parking facilities, getting pretty much involved in city, urban, both large and small cities, general

transportation problems. I did spend a couple of years, before I went to Yale, in highway construction, Massachusetts Highway Department, but that didn't make a major impact on my future attitude towards highway and transit.

ZS: Well surely, the '56 act changed the whole profession, is my understanding.

RK: You're absolutely right; it really did. The interstate program, primarily, just sucked up all the good young people, the way the internet is sucking up all the good people today, so to speak.

So I went straight from being a parking consultant to being hired as the National Capital Planning Commission's first and only – only at that time – traffic engineer; traffic planning engineer was the technical term. I was just on the staff as an advisor in all sorts of traffic and transportation issues. That was in parallel with my being assigned to work on the Mass Transportation Service study, which had been going on for about a year before I got there, and I again became one of – I was just a young traffic planning guy with some good background and probably minimum experience. And then, during the course of the next three or so years, whatever it was, I just took on more and more responsibility. Then, in the last year, I became the project director – the original director had left – and that sort of gives my background.

I was not big on transit. I would have been thought more of as a highway traffic type person, generally speaking. And I was very much involved with highway and traffic

people all these years I worked for the MTS and the NCTA. I'm in the Institute of Transportation Engineers, and despite all my "anti-highway" things I was saying and getting involved in, I was still pretty popular among the guys in the highway traffic work, and I was the president of the local chapter of ITE.

ZS: When was that?

RK: That was 1960.

ZS: So, you never felt you were blacklisted by your work with the NCTA.

RK: No, not at all. In the beginning of the NCTA, Darwin Stolzenbach and a few of the people he brought with him, I guess they probably thought I was too excessive on the highway side, because I didn't blast it and condemn it in totality. That gave me a little trouble with some of the staff people he brought along.

ZS: Let me just ask you, what was your relationship like with Bartholomew? Did he ever give you a sense of what he wanted the MTS to look like?

RK: Oh, no, no. Anything he might have thought or expressed openly along those lines came before I even got there, so to speak. I mean, he spent a couple of years getting the appropriation out of Congress to even make the study. And during all of that period, I suspect the history book shows that probably, maybe even beginning in the early fifties,

say, he was telling people around Washington, hey, we can't go on without a good transit system here. I think we need rapid transit to make this a decent city. And he was following that up by trying to get appropriations from Congress to make a first-class, full blown study, which he ultimately was successful at.

ZS: It seems to me that in his hiring, as you said, at the end, you had all these close votes. The reason you had all these close votes is that Bartholomew set it up to have a couple of transit guys, and Hyde, and a couple of highway guys, particularly Pyke Johnson.

RK: Right, Frank Herring with the Port Authority in New York.

ZS: Was the bus guy, and so it almost seems in retrospect that the whole creature was Bartholomew's. He was the one who, as you said, in 1952, recommended that it be created.

RK: It was his wisdom, or his experience, and he really did it all – the people he hired, the first project director, Ken Hoover, in order to sell them to come and take the job, I'm sure he told them about all these thoughts he had. Ken Hoover had been a transit guy for twenty-five years before that, in the thirties. But I think you'd probably say, and maybe you just said it, Bartholomew really hired a bunch of professional people who were pretty well-balanced between transit and non-transit, and wanted to get a good, honest answer out of them.

ZS: One of the things that various people have pointed out is that the transportation plan itself, the publication of 1959, has this almost mythical narrative about how objective it all was, and how here are the three systems we tested, and here are the results, whereas under the surface, there were a lot of problems. There were political fights, as you said. Wilbur Smith was not producing his data to deadline, so that DeLeuw Cather had to draw these cost estimates out of thin air. It was a very troubled survey in that sense.

RK: It was pretty real-world. I think most projects go along this kind of a path, but go ahead.

ZS: Well, that's what it seems like. I just wondered how seriously I should take the printed report. Was it standard in those days to try to present an image of objectivity? I mean, certainly, I wouldn't want anyone looking at my day-to-day methods on this project. I plan to present them with a nice, clean package at the end, and I'm just wondering if that was sort of professional practice to make it sound a lot easier than it actually was.

RK: It has never occurred to me that those kind of thoughts would go on. It seems to me you're not trying to write, if I can use the word, a history of, or a diary of the thing. You're trying to give the people basic inclusions, basic findings. You're trying to simplify it. You're trying to tell them what you were trying to do and what you did do. I've never seen the report, any report that would delve into much depth on problems you had producing something on schedule or something like that.

ZS: Yeah. Well, for example, it says that there was this idea of the regional seventy-seven mile system that was mooted. The report dismisses that, and it doesn't explain why. And so, in that sense, there's this gap between what the report said happened and what actually happened.

RK: I really don't remember that specific issue about a seventy-seven-mile system. I don't remember that at this point at all. I think the auto-oriented and the bus-oriented and the rail-oriented, those were all done from the outset, knowing we had to show what transportation would be like under each of those conditions. I really don't warm up to this point you're making, I guess, because we didn't think of it the way I think you're thinking of it.

ZS: No, I just want to make sure that I'm reading it correctly. Now, you said in one of your emails that you got a lot of support from people at the Bureau of the Budget. This is something I've come across before, but certainly, Elmer Staats shows up a lot as a supporter. I guess he was both in the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations? He stayed on?

RK: I don't know; I didn't know that he would have. No, I really don't know. Maybe he was – there was a term they used in those days, a professional –

ZS: Civil service?

RK: Civil service. Maybe he did carry on; I don't remember. Anyway, the Bureau was certainly – somewhere along the line – you know, as I wrote that note in the email about the Bureau, I tried to think back. When did the Bureau first become evident as having an interest in this thing? I really couldn't pin it down. I don't know. It was not obvious to us on the staff that the Bureau, say a year or two before the study ended, was going to come out and support it that much. On the other hand, I suspect that Bartholomew, having been around a long time, knowing his way around, knew that he had to have people like that, I suppose, on his side, whatever his side was, so he was probably talking with them a great deal in the four or five years after the appropriation was made.

ZS: Do you remember any specific people whom you found supportive, or was it more of an agency-wide?

RK: No, it was agency-wide. It was kind of one of these things that just happened, and once it happened – I mean, once 1959, 1960 came along, I can't remember anyone else in the Bureau who had a significant concern over it, except for Elmer Staats and Norman Beckman. It was like they were the only people. Of course, they had other people they had to clear things with and say, "Here's where we are, what do you think; what are you going to do about this paragraph of a proposed draft bill?" and that sort of thing. But I don't know there was a lot of people who were that involved in it. It's a mystery to me.

ZS: Okay, because Staats and Beckman are the ones who testify, and it may be that they were campaigning for it. I mean (indiscernible 00:21:20) mentioned to me that someone – I'm

not sure if it was these two – they lived in Rockville, and so driving down to the Old Executive Office Building every day or something, they knew quite well about the need for transportation, and it was as simple as that. As you say, some of these things go on a toss of a coin. Maybe if they had lived closer in, history would have been different.

RK: I don't think so. I would guess that Bartholomew had conversations all during the fifties. There was a number of key people – border trade people, business people, developers. He knew many people throughout the region, like the regional planning councils of the suburbs, Montgomery, Prince Georges, and the Virginia people, Fairfax County. I mean, he was also – you see, at the same sort of time, he had been involved in getting the National Capital Regional Planning Council created. You probably know now just what happened, because I've forgotten when that happened, but it was just a short time before the MPS was launched.

ZS: That was in '52 and one of the things that strikes me about Bartholomew is that he knew everybody, but he was not as politically partisan as someone like Stolzenbach.

RK: Oh, you're absolutely right.

ZS: He was friends with Harry Truman, is my impression.

RK: Oh, you're absolutely right. When I used the expression, maybe in one of these early emails, he really brought a pure professional approach to the thing, and he knew

everyone. This was one of Stolzenbach's problems. He didn't know anybody except the people who appointed him to the job. See, when Darwin started getting in trouble before and after the '62 report came out, he didn't really have many friends, it turned out. You know, there were guys who had really put their head on the line for him, and he kind of overstated some things and got some people angry up on the Hill, and things now I don't even remember, that you probably know very well.

ZS: Oh, there's plenty of incidences I can track down of Stolzenbach getting in hot water; that's not a challenge.

RK: They were totally different people. For me, being a professional engineer, I applaud the Bartholomews of this world. But at least to this point in life, I've seen enough of the citizen involvement, also, but I'm very sympathetic to that, but not the way the Stolzenbach group dropped it on the community. But then again, what other choice did they have? I mean, if they hadn't spoken up and done the things they had done, maybe Washington wouldn't be as nice a city now.

ZS: I can tell you, the house I grew up in would have been under the Northwest Freeway, instead of four blocks from the Friendship Heights Metro.

RK: You'd be surprised how many hours and days I spent with the planning groups and all the other groups, fighting that Northwest Freeway during the MTS. The MTS was going on, and that was a project, but the Capital Planning Commission had day-to-day city planning

going on, and I was involved in both. Some of my first television shows, like in '58 or '57, whenever it might have been, I was on there with either Bartholomew or the director of the National Capital Planning Agency, trying to explain why we shouldn't build the Northwest Freeway, or where we might put it that wouldn't be so destructive. That went on and on and on.

ZS: Who was in favor of the Northwest Freeway?

RK: The D.C. Highway Department and the engineer commissioner, who was I guess all during the MTS, but at the end for sure, was Colonel Welling, who became General Welling, because he said the right things. I should be careful there. I'm not even sure if Mr. Welling is still alive.

ZS: I don't know; I can try to look it up.

RK: Don't bother on my account. What I'm trying to paint here, and maybe I jumped ahead and got off the frequency that you were on here, but an enormous amount of effort was going on every single day for those three or four years about those of us on the city planning side who were trying to get these highway fellows that are running things in the District to back down a little and realize that the instruction was that they had to do something different. But we didn't want to come out in the newspaper too early and blast them and embarrass them, which is what Stolzenbach didn't mind doing.

ZS: The interesting thing there is that, of course, you were from the same background, in a way. You were a trained highway engineer. You had worked for a state highway department. Welling and his staff were also engineers. The thing that historians look at is that there are sort of two ways to run things. You can have government by experts, which is the progressive model, and Harland Bartholomew knows the most, so you let him draw up the plan, and that's that. Or, you can have government by politics, where Stolzenbach and Clark, or whatever, debate out in the open and draw blood, and then the populace votes. What's interesting about that first model, the government by experts, is that a lot of times, the experts have their own debates. It's one thing to say well, the bus people debated the rail people; they had different training. But for you, as a highway engineer, to have this fundamentally different view from the D.C. highway people, how did that happen?

RK: Who knows? I think it's institutional allegiance and getting all wrapped up in the bureaucracy. I don't know, it's very hard to give you a good answer to that. I mean, my being in a city planning agency, and their being in the highway building agencies, the obvious motives to a highway fellow is to build more and more, because, you know, it's the best way for you to build up an organization or be part of an organization that's growing, and therefore, more promotions, more et cetera. I really think that in a subtle way, that's what happens. It's all very subtle, I think. It isn't that people wake up one morning and say, "Oh, boy, I'm going to go out there and build the biggest highway I can because I'll get a better job out of it."

ZS: So in some ways, the fact that you were working for the NCPC gave you a broader view. If you had taken a job in the D.C. Highway Department, you might have been more sympathetic to the desire to build highways, because you would have wanted to do something in your job.

RK: It's quite possible; I don't know. That's very hypothetical, and long ago, I learned you don't respond to hypothetical questions very specifically.

ZS: Fair enough. Now, what do you know about how the National Capital Transportation Act of 1960 was drafted and passed? It's a very curious act. One of the things, for example, it has that freeze west of 12th Street. This was sort of a congressional slap at the D.C. Highway Department, in a way, and of Montgomery County, which my impression is they also wanted the Northwest Freeway. I don't really know where that came from. Do you have a sense of where the freeze came from?

RK: No, I don't. It certainly wasn't in the original bill. I don't know when it was stuck in there. I don't know. I really get a total blank on that. But you're right on the suburban fellows who became our great supporters on the rail side. They wanted the rail system. I'm talking about elected officials, the planning agency officials. I can't remember any of them ever speaking out against the highway, even though they wanted rail in the worst way. But that's beside the point.

ZS: Not entirely. I mean, that's one of the things is that –

RK: I mean, the Stolzenbachs and the Libbys, well, Libby was a D.C. person, and Darwin wasn't really part of the suburban community; in the general sense, he wasn't.

ZS: Right, there's sort of this combination of Cleveland Park and Covington & Burling that seemed to be the –

RK: Yeah, Covington & Burling, they provide a lot of talent.

ZS: Well, you've got Seeger, Horsky, Peter Craig. Now, did you know Ed Burling at all?

RK: No.

ZS: Just to get back to the Transportation Act, it established the NCTA, and in later years of course, the D.C. Highway people in particular claimed that the purpose of the NCTA was to build a transit system and not to meddle in highways. But Stolzenbach argued all along that no, the purpose of the NCTA was to reevaluate the MTS and all the highway plans. Do you remember, when the NCTA was created, what you thought its job was?

RK: I haven't read that act for many, many years, and you have. Isn't that in the preamble, or isn't it obvious?

ZS: Oh, it is. It's a question of how you interpret it, though. There's sort of this offhand mention of oh yes, by the way, we'll review transportation plans.

RK: The fact that I can't remember clearly one way or the other suggests to me that we who were drafting the legislation, me working with the Bureau of the Budget, we thought it was wise to continue the same approach the MTS had used. Like, don't slam the highway program; don't compliment it, but don't slam it, and kind of get our transit system built while we keep bugging them and looking at what they're doing. That's sort of an attitude and it may well have been what we tried to write in the legislation.

ZS: Who wrote that legislation? Who drafted the original document?

RK: Well, I did a tremendous amount of it, but mine was sort of technically oriented to handle the more technical aspects, whatever was going to be said in the legislation. What was going to be said in the legislation in the broader sense all came from the Bureau of the Budget. Of course, many other people participated, and once we got our first draft, you know how those things go. But the first draft was basically a few people in the Bureau of the Budget and me; we just did what we thought it required. If there was any political input or any political special motive being put in, it would have come through the Bureau of the Budget. It wouldn't be coming from me, because I would have remembered that. No one was asking me to do anything like that. It wasn't Bartholomew's and it wasn't anybody else on the planning commission suggesting any special, you know, political orientation to anything I was doing.

ZS: What were you trying to do? What was your goal in completing the MTS?

RK: I was trying to get – I know if I answer this too quickly, too clearly, it will sound as if I already know what I just said I don't know, but we were just trying to get an agency created that could continue the study work we had started in the MTS, continue the study work, and bring it right up to the point of having a buildable plan that could go before legislatures and financial people, and get approval to build it. We knew it needed a big phase of additional planning, mostly details of how should the transit system be, but I really don't remember what we thought we might do about the highway side. We certainly didn't make it as a major mission to straighten out the highway people's thinking.

ZS: That's very helpful and I think that that plugs a gap that I had. You wanted the MTS basic process to continue and not that you expected any particular result, but the most likely result would be something similar to the MTS, a rapid rail system of roughly thirty-three miles that would complement highways and not call for a lot of cancellations of things that the highway department wanted to build.

RK: Right. I can almost remember some words now, like the part where the Bureau of the Budget or somewhere, that right before we got the bill passed, that we couldn't continue this study process under the umbrella of the National Capital Regional Planning Council/National Capital Planning Commission. It wasn't a strong enough agency. We

needed to create a – somebody used a term that's used a lot – an independent federal agency to get on with the job and bring all the details to Congress and get something approved for building.

ZS: Why would that have been stronger than keeping it under the NCPC?

RK: Well, any planning agency anywhere in the world usually has a little bit of – at least in the United States – has a little bit of a soft position in the political hierarchy. No, they can't build things.

ZS: Interesting.

RK: What was needed was something with a lot more political – not political – a lot more operational realism. We could bring in a lot more higher-level transit engineers and transit operating people and have a real large staff. See, we only had a half a dozen people at the MTS. All the rest were consultants. And one might say well, why didn't you just keep up the same thing? Once you move from the very preliminary notion for a big transit system, and this process did get repeated in Atlanta and, you know, everywhere else that's building transit systems. You started with a study group, then you have to shift gears into a preliminary engineering group and all the people change. This would be the stronger agency that can really stand up in the world and be counted. I don't know whether that makes much sense.

ZS: That makes perfect sense. This is a sort of very foggy period from the publication of the MTS to Stolzenbach's arrival, so what you're saying makes sense. It's also quite helpful and new to me. At that point, did you expect that you would go work for this new agency?

RK: Sure. And I did.

ZS: Right, but what was a traffic engineer like you doing in a transit agency like that?

RK: Oh, well, what they wanted was just senior – I wasn't very senior, you might say, based on age – they wanted a senior expert in transportation who knew what the MTS was all about and who could get the thing started quickly, get the new agency, the NCTA, get it started quickly and firmly. I had a lot of friends around and everyone who had any love for the MTS knew that I was one of the key people by that time, even though I had started off as whatever, a highway or traffic engineer. They just knew I was a reliable, professional guy to get things done.

ZS: Now, Holmes Vogel was the administrator. Did he ever do anything? What was his role?

RK: He came in sometime – let's see what the dates were. He was around the office, so to speak, for maybe what, a month or something. Do you have the actual dates when the NCTA went into business? Was it in September, October?

ZS: I believe it went into business September. Let's see, the act was signed July 14, 1960.

RK: Right, that was Bastille Day.

ZS: Before then, just sort of looking through my database here, they were sort of scouting out administrators as early as April 1960.

RK: Right, and I was involved in that process, working again with the Bureau of the Budget. It was the one guy outside of the Bureau of the Budget. We would continually draw up lists of possible candidates and I would call people around the country to see if they knew of anyone, et cetera, et cetera. That was going on – I didn't realize it was in April. But anyway, that went on all summer long. September sounds like the right time for when we got started, and Vogel probably came in sometime in September or very early October. And then, the day after the election, I don't think he ever came back. Some of us were quite surprised; he didn't even come in the office. He just made a telephone call to Neil Tomey, who was the administrative staff guy that was hired initially, by Vogel or somebody.

RK: In that first month or two, he was in charge of all the staff administration and I was in charge of all the staff technical. Whatever terms and titles we had, I don't know. So it was already Tomey and I and Vogel in October and up to the election. We were making all the plans for what our work program would be and where we'd start to hire people.

ZS: I guess my question is, do you think that Vogel – I’m sorry to ask another hypothetical, but if Nixon had won, would Vogel have stayed on, or was he just a placeholder?

RK: No, he was definitely to have been stayed on. Yeah, he was going to be the guy.

ZS: Okay, so he really would have been NCTA administrator in a full capacity.

RK: Oh, yeah.

ZS: But he never went up for Senate confirmation. I guess they knew that the election was coming up.

RK: I guess. I forget. I don’t know, but whatever you say on that I’m sure is accurate.

ZS: Okay. So what was he like? I know almost nothing about him because his time was so brief.

RK: He was a business leader from the old school. I guess he worked for the telephone company.

ZS: That’s right.

RK: He was a gentleman. He was a very distinguished looking guy, a very intelligent guy. I don't think he'd ever been mixed up in politics. Not only not mixed up, I don't think he'd been in politics very much. Why he was appointed, I'm not sure. I think he either had just retired or was thinking about retiring, and somebody said, "Why don't you do this?" I don't know who said that to him. But we had not come up, we meaning the Bureau of the Budget, my working with him had not come up with any good candidates around the country who we really thought were the right guy. And then, all of a sudden, Mr. Vogel came from somewhere. I guess somebody in the Bureau of the Budget, you might say, found him.

ZS: Yeah, I think, just from the papers I have, I think he was recommended by D.C. Republicans and businesspeople, federal city council.

RK: Sure, that's absolutely logical. All those people you mentioned were working with us and wanted this thing to happen.

ZS: And so, that's very interesting. So once he knew that he would – and there was no question that he would stay on under a democratic administration?

RK: Oh, no question. He resigned or something. Yeah, he just walked away the minute he knew it was going to be a democratic – yeah, as soon as Kennedy won, he just walked away. I don't know what term he used, but he just left. So it was left to Tomey and me

to run the agency with somebody's blessing toward the White House, you know, allow us to do that.

ZS: And you felt comfortable, though, in making some key decisions. For example, you hired Tom Deen.

RK: Oh, yeah, there was no question we were on a roll and we were going to go.

ZS: What I'm building up to, of course, is that when Stolzenbach arrives, you and Deen – and did Tomey stay on, or not? I didn't come across anything.

RK: He stayed a while, but I've really mentally lost track of Deen. He was probably only there for a year or something. I don't know, he may have been on for a year.

ZS: Okay. What I'm building up to is Stolzenbach shows up at work, this very partisan, passionate man, and he opens the door and sitting there are two highway engineers who had been put in by the Republican administration, you and Tom Deen.

RK: Well, yeah, Tom wasn't. I put him in; I put Tom in.

ZS: Okay, so how did you pick him?

RK: Oh, I had met him a year or more before, when a group of traffic engineers from Tennessee and other places, I don't know where, but a group of them had come through the year before, just a matter of them coming to Washington. They wanted a little exposure to what's going on in transportation in the big city, and they spent a day or so in the office, and I got to know him that way. And I had a very minor follow-up with Tom afterwards and then when it came to needing some staff, I don't know what criteria I was using, but I concluded all by myself that Tom was the right guy. He had a little time with the Civil Service Commission getting him the usual grade increases and all that, but no, I just picked him myself, as was true with a couple of other fellows.

ZS: My question there, I guess, is why another highway man?

RK: Well, first of all, there were almost no "transit engineers" in the United States in those dates. There was no such thing, except there were some civil engineers who did transit, railroading, and highways, or something like that. But there were no young professionals coming along in the transit world.

ZS: Because the industry was in so much trouble.

RK: Right. And it had been since 1929, since the Depression.

ZS: And just to sidetrack a little, it seems Don Hyde was a real important figure in reversing that.

RK: Yes, yes. Don, he was a really great guy.

ZS: And a champion of rail?

RK: Oh, very much. He really knew his business.

ZS: I'm just trying to figure out where some of these ideas came from. It seems the idea that a brand new rapid transit system was even plausible was, in good part due to his success in Cleveland, and that in bringing him on, Bartholomew was sort of putting rapid transit in the best light he possibly could.

RK: Exactly.

ZS: But there weren't too many Don Hydes in the world. So you got Tom De en. You hired Howard Lyon, is that correct?

RK: Uh-huh.

ZS: I haven't talked to him yet; he's on my list of people to talk to.

RK: He lives out beyond Rockville.

ZS: Yeah, what was his background?

RK: He's a "civil engineer" in the purest sense, and he had a lot of highway and transit design experience. He was on the DeLeuw Cather group that did all the cost estimating and other civil engineering work all during the study, so I got to know him very well that way. He and I had worked together a lot.

ZS: Okay, that's very helpful. I know that there was an NCTA advisory board set up at the same time. Do you remember their ever meeting with you? I just don't quite know what the role was, whether they were just sort of there as figureheads, or whether they were being a more active group.

RK: I don't even remember them existing, but I'm sure they did.

ZS: (Laughter.) Well, that's a perfectly good answer.

RK: That's my memory at the moment. Isn't that funny? That's the first thing you've popped on me that is really a total surprise. Do you know any of the names of those people?

ZS: One of the names was Ed Burling, and that just struck me, because I think he was mostly retired at that point. Okay, here we have, as of January 1, 1961, the chairman was **Morin McConaghy**. Then there was William Moss, of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisor.

RK: I remember that name.

ZS: Edward Burling, Harland Bartholomew – you probably wouldn't have noticed, because he was wearing so many hats. Though I guess he left the NCPC around that time.

RK: He did. That was probably his age or something.

ZS: Well, I think he had wanted to leave earlier. He just wanted to make sure the project was done. And then, Don Hyde was also on that committee.

RK: Boy, you know, that committee really escapes me. Do you have a lot of minutes?

ZS: No, I don't know. I mean, the thing is, you know, you would have had so many different contacts with people like Bartholomew and Hyde that they wouldn't have been approaching you as members of the committee. They would have been approaching you as Bartholomew and Hyde, and I don't know that the committee ever did anything as a body. Now, the same thing happened under Kennedy. That is, he had people – under Kennedy, the advisory committee included Tom Farmer, who certainly, that was not a full-time job, but that gave him some official status, which seems significant to me that an important freeway opponent would have this official status. And then, also under Kennedy, Fritz Gutheim I think was the chairman of that board, and he definitely used that opportunity.

RK: Excuse me, let me ask you to back up. You were talking about the NCTA advisory board of January 1961, and you read some names. And then you said under Kennedy.

ZS: Right. I'm saying Kennedy put in his own people.

RK: But the first list was?

ZS: The first list was Eisenhower's people.

RK: That wasn't NCTA then. You don't mean that.

ZS: Yes, I do. This is under Vogel.

RK: Is that right?

ZS: Yeah, this is three weeks prior to the Kennedy inauguration.

RK: Oh, I'll be darned.

ZS: So there are, at this point I think – and the reason I said January '61 is that's just when I have a report published.

RK: Okay, they never met, probably, did they?

ZS: Maybe not.

RK: I don't think so.

ZS: I have no record of their meeting. That's the thing, I have very little documentation of any sort of what happened between September 1960, when the agency was created, and the spring of 1961. It's all kind of murky. So it may be that this board was appointed and they never met.

RK: I'm sure that's just about what happened. They may have had one meeting, but I don't know that they even had the one.

ZS: The only reason this is significant is that there's this reversal between Bartholomew and Stolzenbach, and all I need to establish is that the reversal was not the National Capital Transportation Act, because you have all this continuity between the MTS and the NCTA under Eisenhower. The reversal was the election of 1960.

RK: That's right.

ZS: That's all I want to establish.

RK: Well, you're right on that.

ZS: Okay, well, you know, seems obvious to you. Everything I've read about the MTS, things put out by the Council of Governments and so forth, this has not been put out. So, you know, a lot of times, the job of a historian is to point out things that are obvious to people who were there, but have been forgotten by other people. We're sort of scavengers in that way. Okay, so you've got continuity with you, with Lyon, with Hyde and Bartholomew. So what happened after Kennedy's inaugural? Did anyone ask your opinion of who should be the administrator?

RK: Oh, no, no. There were no more questions like that. We just found out about it in some word-of-mouth thing that, "Oh, did you guys hear? Darwin Stolzenbach's going to be the administrator." People who were on the staff said, "Who is he?" I said, "Well, he's probably a citizen out there in Maryland. He's been outspoken against any of the highway work." Then we started to scratch our heads, so it went on from there. I don't know when we really found out officially. I don't know what went on, the Democratic Committee of the District, or something like that, did it all, working with the White House.

ZS: So you had never met him, prior to his –

RK: Well, I can't say that. I had met him in a couple of citizen meetings, where I viewed him as another citizen asking some hard questions at a public meeting from the audience. I was up there making a presentation for the MTS, and that was it. He was just one more

of these people asking some good, hard questions. I met him in that sense, but no more than that.

ZS: So what happened when he showed up at work?

RK: Oh, I don't really remember. It isn't any clear picture what happened. But in essence, he'd really been hiring people, a half a dozen people, you mentioned some of the names, Ed Seeger and half a dozen other people. He had been just looking around for these kind of people before it was very much publicized that he was going to be the administrator, before he even showed up. I'm sure that when he first showed up, he probably called a staff meeting. And the staff, if it was the very first day, would be consisting of Tom Deen and Howard Lyon, myself, Neil Tomey, and there was only another half dozen people. You know, we're there for that kind of meeting, where are you and what have you laid out for work plans, where's the budget, and all that sort of thing.

But after that, he brought on these half a dozen or a dozen people, you know, various economists and various special areas like that, but people he knew or had been suggested to him as people he could trust. He was looking for people who would totally endorse his point of view on trying to stop the highways. He certainly didn't want people making key decisions on his NCTA plan who didn't know, who seemed to have somewhat of a pro-highway position, or any previous information on the MTS. He wanted to make sure he was pretty clean of all that, which can be understandable.

ZS: But that must have made things awkward with you, given that you were exactly all of those things.

RK: Yeah. Yeah, that's true, but he didn't so much take away anything; he just brought in, created some other departments, additional departments, but I continued to do a great deal of what I was going to do anyway.

ZS: Which was what, route planning and –

RK: Which was doing the re-planning, getting the traffic forecasting up, doing another round of the traffic forecasting, and getting on with all kinds of cost estimates for various things. It was all the civil engineering. He made sure he had these other people coming in. I say economists; quite a few of the fellows were economists. In fact, after – I must interrupt my train of thought here. After two or three months of this process of his fellows coming in, and me and Tom and the two others trying to do our thing, and doing it cooperatively under the direction he wanted, one of the economists was really outspoken and became a pretty good friend of mine later. He says, “Bob, are you an economist, or aren't you?” I said, “I'm not an economist.” He says, “I thought, from the day I walked in here, you were. You've been acting like one of us.” (Laughter.) I said, “No, unfortunately, I'm just an engineer.”

But anyway, maybe that half explains. He had other working units, other departments, other specialty areas. He had brought in community experts; people who knew the

community would go out and see what people in different neighborhoods would want; economists, who had taken a whole different approach to public funding and public finance. He was getting into a lot of other things, and he did not stop Tom Deen and me and others from doing our regular work. It's just that he wanted to have the assumptions being built into things come from a different basis. He didn't change the numbers. He didn't do anything like that, really. But he just had us looking at different options, different alternatives from what we would have been looking at, because we thought some of that was past history, it wasn't relevant, or whatever.

ZS: Okay, I've got a couple questions about what you've just said. First, did the MTS, then, lack those economists and community people?

RK: Not so much lacking, no. We didn't lack them. They were within the different consultants we had, the Institute for Public Administration was one. You remember Mr. Vickrey from Columbia?

ZS: Right.

RK: And others, you know. There were these people, but when we went from the MTS to the NCTA, the idea was we're going to hire staff. We hadn't had time to even think about these other specialty areas, as this transition of Vogel to Stolzenbach was happening around us.

ZS: And would that also be true, you said that you were doing more cost estimates and more traffic forecasting?

RK: He was getting ready to do it. You know, there was a lot of preparation work, data gathering.

ZS: A lot of that was done under the MTS. Were you doing the same thing over again? Were you doing it in more detail? Why couldn't you just use the numbers in the MTS to plan a transit system?

RK: Well, the modal split models were probably the weakest part of the MTS, and a lot was happening. I said at the beginning of this conversation there wasn't much technically that was happening. But modal split models, the choice between transit and auto, they were I guess improving a great deal in that period, and we wanted to do a lot better there. I know we ended up, I don't know when the decision to do it was made, probably after Stolzenbach was there. We did a lot of focus group interviewing and trying to understand a little bit more about what, why, and how the people decided to shift from automobile to transit. We did quite a bit of that, and that was under Stolzenbach, the work. I don't quite remember at all now what we tended to do along those lines, but certainly, there was a need to do it, and we did it. But that's just an example. There was better forecasting going on.

ZS: Okay, so you weren't necessarily questioning the MTS?

RK: Oh, no, no. It wasn't from that point of view at all. It just may not sound right as I say it, but this is like what I said ten, twenty minutes ago. You know, you go through the early study phase, and you do the technical work as good as it has to be in order to get through that study phase. You know, you don't have unlimited budgets and unlimited et cetera. Then you move up to the preliminary planning stage, and you want to do a lot of things quite a bit better, in more depth. It's really that simple.

ZS: Sure, no, it's just I need to hear that because, you know, it's like I have to learn several different professions real quickly. I need to understand how traffic planners work, how architects work. They told me the same thing: Well, you start with a sketch, and then you go to the concept design. Every profession has its own progress. Sometimes, to some extent, from his point of view, Stolzenbach really wanted to attack the conclusions of the MTS.

RK: Yeah, he did. There's no question about that. And you know, this fuzziness that comes on after thirty, forty years of being away from it, I really can't remember some of the very specific things that he would have complained about or that we would have felt about things, but we never felt that we had anything; there wasn't any embarrassment about the preliminary approaches we had used in the MTS. It was never that; it was just that the world was changing rapidly as far as technical abilities to do traffic forecasting. And I know you said that right at the beginning, and I tend to disagree with you a little bit. What I was disagreeing with, maybe at the beginning, was the numbers didn't come

out that much different in the end. It's just that they were more understandable to more people, and they certainly were more reliable. But I don't think the numbers changed anything.

ZS: Now, going to route planning, you were involved with that, correct?

RK: Sure.

ZS: So you start with this map of Washington. How do you decide where the trains are going to go?

RK: Well, of course a suburban corridor is one thing, and downtown routing is another. You know, they're two different animals. In the suburban side of it, you want to look for a relatively easy right of way, the same way the highway people would, but a little bit different issue. You want to look for the railroads that you might get new rapid transit tracks onto. You look for a freeway that's either about to be built, or one way or another, would have space in it to add a rail line, rail tracks. And of course, you look for concentrations of people, and you look for where could stations be built, with large parking areas. That's pretty simplified. That's about it.

When you get downtown, economy is one thing you've got in mind. Generally speaking, you're going to want to take a nice straight shot right through, without a lot of S-turns and turning back underground and all the subway work. And again, you're looking for

streets that are probably going to be – you know, in this first stage, you're not all that precise which street the subway ought to be under. You just don't have the time to do it. But you still look for streets that are probably wide enough to easily support underground construction between the curb lines without knocking down some buildings. You have somewhat in mind where the water level is or what the underground soil conditions are, or where there's a lot of underground utilities already.

You know, down around 14th and New York Avenue, I don't know why I picked that, but some streets have a ton of underground utilities, and it would cost you a fortune, maybe right outside the telephone company building or something like that, so you avoid those, obviously. Again, you're looking for stations. You do a lot of thinking on how close should the stations be downtown. Everyone wants them close, except it slows down the trains to have them too close, and it costs a lot of money to have too many extra stations. So those are the things that go through your mind when you're trying to put something on a map.

ZS: Do you remember any specific decisions? For example, one question I always get from people is why there's no station in Georgetown. The only map I've ever found of a Georgetown Metro was a sketch done by John Williams, sometime around 1961 or '62. That was just a quick sketch, and that was that. But do you remember any particular discussions about specific stations like that?

RK: Specific discussions I don't remember, but I just know that we were told the Georgetown people didn't want any of that stuff.

ZS: Interesting. Do you remember who told you that?

RK: No. No, it was just commonly understood, and I don't mean that in any secretive way. It's just the people in Georgetown. Maybe they spoke to Harland Bartholomew; maybe they spoke to somebody, but that was true. In a minor way, that's probably true in the latter stages of the MTS, but it was certainly true in the early stages of the NCTA, you know, don't go into Georgetown. They don't want all that disruption.

ZS: Now, I came across this one memo from Stolzenbach to you, from June '62. He was responding to a memo that Jack Mole had written. Was he on your staff?

RK: He was one of the economists I referred to that Stolzenbach brought in. I know Jack. In fact, he and I were in Tehran, Iran, about ten years later. He was working for himself, and I was working for a consulting company, and that's where I first met him after those days with NCTA. But that's beside the point. Oh, by the way, you mentioned John Williams before. John was one of the guys I had hired right at the beginning.

ZS: Oh, you did. Okay, so how did you find him?

RK: I don't know, but our paths continually were crossing each other all during that period and on into the next twenty-five years. He came up to Boston when I was – I went to MBTA. I'm getting outside the story, but anyway, he worked for me up in Boston, too, at MBTA in the late sixties. I don't know where I first ran into John. And then, of course, now you remind me of John Randall. I didn't hire John Randall. Is he one of the names you happen to have?

ZS: Rannells, yeah.

RK: He was an architect with a great interest in city transportation. He came down from Philadelphia. I suppose Stolzenbach's people may have brought John in.

ZS: Yeah, I think so. Williams is interesting for a couple reasons. First of all, he had spent some time in Scandinavia, is that right?

RK: That's right, he did. In fact, okay, again I'm getting off the path here, but about four years later, when I was at the MBTA in Boston, and I was involved, working in the governor's office writing that legislation to get the MBTA created. After I'd been at work just four or five months at the new MBTA in '65, I went to Finland and Scandinavia, Stockholm, and John helped me set that up, because he'd already been there.

ZS: Set up a tour of Stockholm?

RK: At tour, yeah, with the key people over there and all. But that's nothing of interest to you.

ZS: Well, it's a little bit, because the other interesting thing about Williams is that he saved all his paper, and so, from a historian's point of view, I've got all these sketches by John Williams, and memos and things that he I guess gave to Stolzenbach and they're now at George Washington University. So he's one of these people that shows up a lot. He's always writing memos saying well, in Stockholm, here's how they do it. Since Stockholm was really, if I understand it, was sort of the state-of-the-art system of the 1960s. I just wonder who was reading those memos that he was writing and how seriously those were taken.

RK: I don't know. We'd have to take those one at a time. But all the work that he and John Rannells were doing was all cranked into a lot of the thinking of the plan that was emerging there at NCTA, but they weren't necessarily calling the shots. They were producing all these brainstorming about good ideas here and ideas there, but I don't remember now the way in which some – probably most of his ideas weren't even used, but he had a lot of good ideas all over the place. That's all I can add to that.

ZS: The other people who were there, there was Stanley Forsythe, and he proposed this loop, as I understand it, that might have used these bus-rail hybrids, and everyone thought that was crazy.

RK: Stan is a very good fellow, and he's a transit operations guy and had a very senior job at Chicago Transit Authority before he came to NCTA. But his ideas were kind of extreme for all of us, both the Stolzenbach extremists and the MTS guys like me. They just didn't seem to fit anything. I don't mean all his ideas. When he tried to become a transit planner as opposed to a transit operator, he'd get in a little trouble.

ZS: Okay, that makes sense.

RK: Operating people are always frustrated they can't plan anything. Plan by somebody else bothers them.

ZS: I'm trying to figure out which committees were the key ones that shaped the NCTA 1962 report. It seems that the route planning committee had a lot of sway. I guess my question is, was that a technical process, pretty much, of finding the –

RK: It was both, but the basic work that was going on, day in and day out, was pretty solid, conventional stuff. But Darwin Stolzenbach and some of his key people, the Ed Seegers and the others, they would periodically have talked with some people, or have some ideas on their own, and say hey, you know, we've really got to look into this thing here. And, you know, sometimes, those ideas just became part of the plan, mainly for I guess you'd call it political reasons, but a little bit. There's a lot of better reasons than that, but

essentially for political reasons. But most everything that was in the plan did have sense to it. See, a lot of these questions don't have black and white answers, you know?

ZS: Sure.

RK: That's maybe where they could easily look bad or not so bad, but maybe that's where I have a little trouble answering your questions. So many of these things are not black and white, yes/no, right or wrong, because there were a lot of options out there for putting down routes in different areas, and it doesn't come out of the traffic forecasting numbers. It comes from a lot of common sense and a lot of just trying to make reasonable estimates.

ZS: That's very helpful, because sometimes, it's quite mysterious where these maps come from. Now, were you pretty happy with the way the November report came out? Did you think that was a reasonable document?

RK: Most of it was, yeah. You know, it's a funny thing. You get so involved in just getting your work done every day, and it's all this overtime, and we were really working overtime just to make schedules and deadlines. You get so wrapped up, and even though you initially didn't think it was a very good idea and it wouldn't have been your idea to begin with, by the time you develop all those numbers that that scheme represents, you kind of forget some of your initial objections, and you just get so pleased to have a

halfway decent thing at the end of the day that you forgot you didn't like it to begin with.

I don't know if that makes any sense.

ZS: Sure.

RK: No, we didn't have time to sit around; we didn't have time. I'm certainly not the kind of guy that would sit around, moaning about something I was producing a report for and saying oh, this lousy report. What the hell am I writing all these words for? That isn't the way I operate. I just try to make the best out of whatever schemes occasionally might have been given to us to test and develop, try to get some numbers for it, see what it meant. There were a few things. I can't remember the exact date or timing of this, but let's say the November '62 report, in there was the drawing of the proposed plan of rail lines. There was something going out to the east, let's say down East Capitol Street direction and across the Anacostia River. These big dotted lines were put on the map and said future.

I don't know if it comes that way to you when you're looking at the history, and maybe my memory is a little fuzzy, but when were ninety-nine percent done with the plan, we were going to put it in the report, all of a sudden, Darwin and Ed Seeger, et cetera, said, "Hey, look, some people on the committees aren't going to vote for this if we don't show a future possibility here." So they added that line to the map, just like that.

Now, I may be telling a story here that doesn't make sense to you because you don't have the right map in front of you that picks up on this point. But there was one drawing it seems to me I remember as in the November '62 report that has this broad dashed line going out East Capitol Street across the Anacostia River, Benning Road, and that there, and it just said future.

ZS: Hold on a second, I've got a photocopy of the 1962 report. I can get this. There it is, page 37.

RK: Really?

ZS: Yeah, with a little arrow going out.

RK: Well, I think I think I expressed it accurately, but that thing just showed up. But, you know, so what?

ZS: But there's a line there now. That's now the Blue Line.

RK: Well, from November '62 to the late sixties, a lot of other work was done. You and I haven't talked about that, and I wouldn't be very useful to talk about it, because I wasn't there.

ZS: You left in spring of '63, is that correct?

RK: Right.

ZS: And I guess Bill Herman would be the best person to get on that.

RK: By the way, just to help you get a sense, Bill was a fellow that Stolzenbach brought in, but Bill was a fine guy. That doesn't cast in any negative way the fact that – and there are others that Stolzenbach brought in. They brought in guys that were needed, and they were fine. Somebody had to hire somebody like Bill sooner or later. We just hadn't gotten around to that in the first few weeks. So Bill's a fine guy, and there's a lot of fine guys brought in.

ZS: Well, how seriously should I take this division, then, between the people, you and Lyon and Deen and Williams, I guess, who came on before Stolzenbach, and Stolzenbach's crew? That is, was there tension within the agency?

RK: No, there wasn't. I guess as long as you ask me, I would suggest you're onto something that isn't very real, or relevant. It almost didn't exist.

ZS: So there was fairly high morale?

RK: Oh yeah, yeah.

ZS: I mean, that's my impression, at least until the defeat of the bill in 1963, that this was actually quite a fun place to work.

RK: It was. And the way I would put it, but I wouldn't exactly think this would look good in print, we who were there in the first few weeks, we were pretty well absorbed in the thing, and we were happy doing it and working overtime, and all that. But Stolzenbach certainly had a few extreme weirdos that they brought in, but Darwin and Ed Seeger knew how to work with them and use them, and all this sort of thing. They were more these political henchmen or whatever. They'd go out and talk to various small-time politicians around the community and come back with ideas, and all that. They were kind of unpleasant people to think back on, but they didn't get into the day-to-day work too much.

ZS: These were people on the staff?

RK: Yeah, I'm not going to go beyond that.

ZS: (Laughter.) Okay. But they did not work the report?

RK: No, but they certainly could have contributed to Darwin Stolzenbach's personal thoughts on what he'd like and didn't like about things. Some of them were his advisors on small-time politics going on in the community.

ZS: The funny thing is, in a way, that he seems to have made some real efforts to reach out to the community, and then finds himself largely without support in 1963.

RK: I can't really explain that. I don't get any vibes as to what I would say to that quickly.

ZS: Fair enough.

RK: I think border trade, federal city council, is that the right word?

ZS: Yeah.

RK: These sort of people, I think they must have, these people must have been frightened at Darwin Stolzenbach's great opposition to highway construction, because while the border trade, federal city council, and these kind of people wanted the rail system as much as they could want anything, they didn't really want to give up on their highways because most people are going to use highway anyway. I mean, most people in a metropolitan area have to have a number of highways. Exactly where they should go and how big they should be is another question, but they didn't want the District cut off without any new highways.

ZS: Got it.

RK: In essence, they were pretty happy with the MTS leave-it-alone-kind-of-thing, I guess you might say.

ZS: That certainly shows up in the newspapers, as well. They were quite frustrated with Stolzenbach.

RK: Right. Where have I left you, with a lot of thoughts, and they don't tie together in any –

ZS: No, they do. What I want to do is account for, not to oversimplify things, but to identify a few patterns. The big picture is yes, the election of 1960 changes a lot of things. On the other hand, Bartholomew had his own politics. He was not an apolitical person. He wanted to balance rail and transit. It was not this expert voice from above. And Stolzenbach had his political agenda, but I haven't really found evidence of his interfering with his technical staff. The only thing is Tom Deen said, "Well, maybe we overestimated the cost of parking," which is really – you know.

RK: We may have, but that was more of a technician's misjudgment.

ZS: Compared to the things that Stolzenbach was accused of, that's pretty minor, you know, compared to the things that the highway people said about him. So, in a sense, both of these efforts are politically shaped, and both of them are technically honest, and yet, they come out in opposite ways. And so, that's just the sort of complicated story I need to nail

down here, but I think this has actually been quite helpful. What made you leave the NCTA? Were you always planning to leave after the report was done?

RK: It's a little hard to explain now, but I didn't personally admire working for Stolzenbach. You know, once we got the November report out, and we got that job done and got something going, made that deadline, I think it was after that I kind of said what are you doing here? This guy is a little bit of a wild man. The pure professional life that I had been living in was different under him, but maybe it was just realistic. I was getting street smarts, I guess, but he wasn't a pleasant person to work with in the long run. I think among my professional friends, I was probably saying hey, there must be some of these guys I know well and like well, and we like each other, beginning to wonder what the hell I'm doing here, because this guy was rubbing everybody who had a normal professional outlook on transportation and city development.

ZS: So these would have been the highway engineers, for example?

RK: Well, largely that, but an economist I can think of worked for the Board of Trade, some of these really decent people that I'd gotten to know over five or eight years. Darwin just questioned everybody, and he was super critical of what the established professionals didn't do or did do, and he was critical about it. He was a difficult guy to like.

ZS: Certainly, a lot of people agree.

RK: See, I'm not particularly an emotional kind of guy in the way I think and behave. If I were, I'd be really castigating the guy here on this telephone call with you. But, you know, that doesn't make sense. He's doing it the way he thought was it, and this goes on all over the country, all the time, in some way or another.

ZS: Well, if we make it less personal, though, and part of the way I see things is that if you get an individual like Stolzenbach in the job, you have to step back and say well, why was he put into that job in the first place? Was it a mistake of the Kennedy administration to politicize this whole agency in that way? I mean, they could have kept it a much more technical agency, and it would have probably built a rail system of some sort, and we would have had the Inner Loop and the Three Sisters Bridge and all these highways. And so, I think what you get, to remove it from the personalities, is almost a philosophical point of view of how should transportation planning be done in a free society. If you make it too democratic, nothing gets built, and if you leave it all to the experts, then you get a lot of neighborhoods destroyed.

RK: That's right. You're absolutely right, and there's no arguing with that. It's the way it is. Anyway, I hope I've been a little helpful to you.

ZS: This has been extremely helpful. It's filled in a lot of holes that I had. If you think of anything else, please send me an email. I will send you that release form, you know, just for completion's sake.

RK: Sure, we'll do that. And what's your general schedule? You going to finish something up?

ZS: Well, I'm based at Columbia. I have this academic year to spend in Washington to do pretty much all the primary research. I mean, I can get things like congressional hearings easily enough in New York, but almost everyone I'm interviewing is still in the Washington area, and certainly the sources are at the National Archives, at George Washington University, at D.C. Public. My main priority is to do all the research, but I'm also writing draft chapters, and that's because otherwise, you don't know what questions to ask, basically. And so, I don't know, I'd hoped to I think defend the dissertation in the spring of 2001, would be the most realistic thing I could tell you, and then publish this book in another couple of years.

RK: Okay, well, I certainly wish you luck with it, because anything that involves what I spent important years of my life in, just on that grounds alone, I'd love to see something come out in print.

ZS: I'm glad to hear that. I hope to sell you a copy someday. I think I'll tell this to my publisher, "Well, I interviewed a hundred people, and they all want copies."

RK: Will it be available through Amazon?

ZS: I'm sure it will.

RK: Okay, Zachary, this has been very good. It's helped me bring back a lot of memories that are all good.

ZS: Thanks very much.

RK: You bet. Bye-bye.

ZS: Bye.

[End of interview]